

The End of the Line

Trevor Phillippi

Film Annotation #4

10/07/14

535 Words

Title, director and release year?

The End of the Line is a 2009 documentary film directed by Rupert Murray covering the effects of overfishing and implications on other species.

What is the central argument or narrative of the film?

The central argument of the film is that human fishing practices have caused irreparable damage to various fish species populations. Fish have sustained various cultures for a long time, but we face a crisis, having already seen several fish species become basically extinct. We risk exhausting the ocean of its most important resource to humans.

How is the argument or narrative made and sustained? (Use concrete examples from the film to illustrate.)

The argument is made by investigative journalism by Charles Clover, as well as interviews with experts and accompanying visualizations. Clover is on a mission, and his stories and insight pepper the film, like when he calls London restaurants to ask the origins of their fish and makes them aware of their endangered status. At the conclusion of the film he is successful in getting several restaurants to rethink their menu.

What sustainability issues did you spot? Identify and explain each. (Examples - Political, Legal, Economic, Technological, Media, Organizational, Educational, Behavioral, Cultural, Ecological)

The first issue that stood out to me that was different from other films is the clear cut legal issue of lax laws or laws not being enforced. The film shows how Alaska has been successful in maintaining population through strict control of fishing times and general regulation. Additionally, there are economic implications of these issues for indigenous people groups that have relied for a long time on particular populations of fish. Additionally, there are potential ecological implications of taking key predators out of a region; we've seen massive expansion of certain types of plankton.

What parts of the film did you find most persuasive and/or compelling?

The portions of the film I found the most compelling were the ones where it was discussing fish that are essentially extinct. They traced the history of a given fish and often showed graphs of the population decline and examined the impacts. I also generally found the prospect of a world with no fish frightening and compelling.

Does the film have emotional appeal to you? Why? (Use concrete examples from the film to illustrate.)

Showing old black and white pictures of the fish made me personally feel nostalgic in a way. It was as if even though I've never really eaten a blue-fin tuna, I could lament the loss of this great species, especially after seeing the giant photos of it. It also appealed to me emotionally because I really like fish.

Does the film rely more on science or emotion? (How does the film balance the scientific argument and the emotional argument?)

I think the film does a good job of basically relying on science entirely. The only emotional components are the ones making predictions about how we won't be able to eat fish eventually.

Does the film want you to do something? If the film does suggest action, do you think it is a good idea? Will the suggested action help?

The main call to action is to not buy endangered fish and make sure to look for stickers at the grocery store that certify the ethics of farming or catching fish. I think these are, in general, good and practical solution.

Are there other actions that are not suggested that should be taken?

I think that it might have been helpful to suggest some plentiful fish that are okay to eat, or also offer other meat/other recommendations if someone's diet depends on fish but they want to take a break from it.

What was the target audience for this film? Why?

I think the target audience is generally wealthier folks who can afford fish in general. Clover's investigations into the restaurants made the film seem a little less approachable because of how "classy" they were and out of touch with reality. All of that said, I think it's still an effective film for all people because most people have bought fish before.